R E P O R T R E S U M E S

ED 020 258 UD 005 745

PRINCE EDWARD COUNTY, AV HELPS VIRGINIA'S DEPRIVED.

BY- EDGERTON, WILBERT D.

PUB DATE JAN 65

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.25 HC-$0.28 5P.

DESCRIPTORS- *FREEDOM SCHOOLS, *AUDIOVISUAL AIDS, *DISADVANTAGED YOUTH, SCHOOL CLOSING, AUDIOVISUAL INSTRUCTION, NEGRO STUDENTS, GROUPING (INSTRUCTIONAL PURPOSES), TEAM TEACHING, AUDIOVISUAL PROGRAMS, AUDIOVISUAL CENTERS, INSERVICE TEACHER EDUCATION, SPEECH INSTRUCTION, NONGRADED CLASSES, CULTURAL ACTIVITIES, PRINCE EDWARD COUNTY, VIRGINIA, LANGUAGE MASTER

DISCUSSED IS THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE PRINCE EDWARD COUNTY FREE SCHOOLS IN VIRGINIA. MANY OF THE CHILDREN HAD NOT ATTENDED SCHOOLS FOR 4 YEARS FOLLOWING THE CLOSURE OF THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND, THEREFORE, THE TRADITIONAL EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM WAS FELT TO BE INADEQUATE FOR THESE STUDENTS. THE FREE SCHOOLS INITIATED UNGRADED CLASSES, TEAM TEACHING, AN EXPANDED AUDIOVISUAL PROGRAM, AND INCREASED SCHOOL TIME. A CENTRAL AUDIOVISUAL CENTER WAS ESTABLISHED TO SERVE ALL THE UNITS OF THE FREE SCHOOLS. THE LANGUAGE MASTER, A DEVICE WHICH COMBINES WRITTEN AND AURAL PRESENTATIONS, WAS CONSIDERED TO BE VERY VALUABLE FOR TEACHING STANDARD ENGLISH TO THE MANY CHILDREN WITH SERIOUS SPEECH PROBLEMS. INSERVICE TRAINING IN THE USE OF AUDIOVISUAL MEDIA WAS PROVIDED. OTHER IMPORTANT COMPONENTS OF THE FREE SCHOOLS PROGRAM WERE FIELD TRIPS, A SUMMER SCHOOL, AND FILMS AND CULTURAL EVENTS FOR THE ENTIRE COMMUNITY. THE AUDIOVISUAL PROGRAM WAS CONSIDERED TO BE SO SUCCESSFUL THAT WHEN THE FREE SCHOOLS CLOSED AFTER ONE YEAR, ALL OF THE EQUIPMENT WAS GIVEN TO THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS WITH THE PROVISO THAT THE PROGRAM BE CONTINUED. THIS ARTICLE WAS PUBLISHED IN "AUDIOVISUAL INSTRUCTION," VOLUME 10, NUMBER 1, JANUARY 1965. (NH)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

ED 020258

PRINCE EDWARD COUNTY

AV Helps Virginia's Deprived

Wilbert D. Edgerton

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY Dept. of Audio Visual Instruction.
TO ERIC AND ORGANIZATIONS OPERATING UNDER AGREEMENTS WITH THE U.S. OFFICE OF EDUCATION. FURTHER REPRODUCTION OUTSIDE THE ERIC SYSTEM REQUIRES PERMISSION OF THE COPYRIGHT OWNER."

Nineteen hundred and sixty-three marked an end and a beginning in Prince Edward County in Virginia. It marked an end to the lack of educational opportunity for the county's 1,600 Negro children who had suffered for four years the effects of the shutdown of the public schools which resulted from the integration controversy. But it also marked a beginning—a beginning of a unique educational enterprise called the Prince Edward Free School Association.

Now that the short but timely existence of the Free Schools is a matter of history, it is possible to look back and see how this enterprise served the many culturally disadvantaged children of the rural Virginia county. It is also possible to see the implications which the Free Schools' program holds for similarly disadvantaged children throughout our nation.

UD 005 745

A Brief History

In September 1963, Dr. Neil V. Sullivan left his position as superintendent of Schools in Williston, L. I., New York, to come to Prince Edward County to set up the Free Schools. He came at the request of a group of Virginia educators who had formed the Prince Edward Free School Association with the support of private, organizational, and corporate funds. The school system which he was to head in Farmville, Virginia, was to be open to all children of the county, regardless of color, and was to have an integrated faculty and staff.

The task before the board of trustees, superintendent of schools, and staff of the Free Schools was enormous. They were to try to help children who had been without education for four long and arduous years to make up, insofar as possible, for the gaps in their education. Almost universally the children whom the Free Schools were to serve came from economically and culturally impoverished homes where many of the parents were illiterate. They were inadequately clothed and fed. Many didn't know how to turn a page or hold a pencil, and some could only communicate in fragmented sentences, monosyllables, or with gestures. The children who once had been able to read had lost this skill in large part during the period the schools were shut down. As a result of these and many other factors, the IQ scores of many of the children had dropped as much as 30 points in the four-year period when there were no schools open to them.

Such a desperate situation called for drastic measures. The traditional school program obviously would be inadequate to deal with the needs of these children. After careful analysis, a program was initiated in the Free Schools which included a nongraded school concept; team teaching; an expanded audiovisual program; and a longer school day, week, and year than is usual.

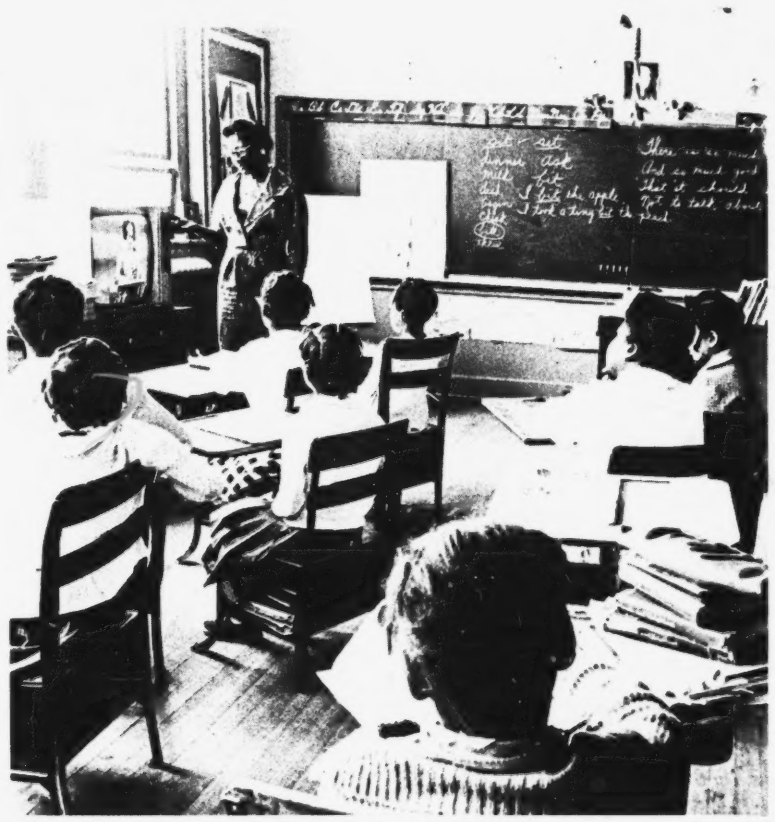
The Nongraded Concept and Team Teaching

In order to put the nongraded concept into practice, the children were assigned to the elementary division, which was further subdivided into the primary and middle schools; or to the secondary division, which was subdivided into the lower and upper schools. Each student in the Free Schools progressed from level to level as quickly as he was able to master the materials and skills. No grade labels were specified, nor were there any promotions or retentions. When a child covered the materials slowly or when the level was too high, he was regrouped. The child's academic and emotional progress determined his place.

Initially, age groups constituted the basis for place-

Photographs by Carol Crosby

Copyright 1964. Department of Audiovisual Instruction, NEA



One hour a day was set aside to participate in ETV lessons beamed from Richmond, Virginia.

Miss Sylvia Rawlings, speech teacher, observes as a student works with the Language Master.

Miss Rawlings uses a phonograph and earphones to help a little girl with her pronunciation problems.

ment. Children in the 6-9 age bracket were assigned to the primary school: those in the 10-12 bracket, to the middle school; those 13-15, to the lower school; and those 16 years of age and over, to the upper school. After the schools had been in operation for a while, most of the students developed and progressed to the extent that there were no longer pure age groups.

Instructional emphasis was directed to different areas at the various levels. In the primary school, emphasis was placed on reading, oral and written communication skills, social understandings, and cultural orientation and enrichment. As fundamental skills were developed, academic emphasis shifted toward more conventional content. Reading instruction, the language arts, social science, and mathematics were emphasized in the middle school. Course offerings in the upper school covered the areas of general education, college preparatory courses, business education, home making, agriculture, the building trades, auto mechanics, and industrial arts.

Team teaching is a natural adjunct to the nongraded school concept, where children move from class to class in accordance with their academic needs. In the Free Schools, teams were composed of a team leader, one or more junior teachers, special area teachers, and related consultants in order to meet the special needs of the children. This organization fell into line with a definition of team teaching which appeared in the May 1961 issue of *The Journal of Secondary Education,* which defined the practice as "an arrangement whereby two or more class groups during a given period (s) meet in order to take advantage of their respective special competences."

The Audiovisual Program

Two major problems had to be considered in initiating and implementing a truly effective audiovisual program for the Free Schools: obtaining costly major items of audiovisual equipment, and justifying such equipment for a school system that would be in operation for only one short year. The former problem, that

of obtaining TV equipment and materials, was solved by the tireless efforts of Dr. Sullivan and William vanden Heuvel, a special assistant to the Attorney General of the United States. Audiovisual equipment was secured through purchases, donations by private citizens, and the tremendous generosity of manufacturers of AV equipment, film producers, distributors, and film libraries. Many items that would have been prohibitive in cost were given to the Free Schools.

In order to insure obtaining maximum value from the equipment during the Free Schools' brief period of operation, it was necessary to plan the audiovisual program carefully. The audiovisual program was headed by a director who worked closely with and through the directors of elementary and secondary education. It was the audiovisual director's responsibility to coordinate the selection, purchase, circulation, repair, and storage of audiovisual equipment. His second major responsibility was for an in-service teacher training program in audiovisual education.

The central AV Center was located in the high school, which also served as an administration building. The AV center contained materials and equipment utilized by the high school, and major items circulated to the elementary schools. The film and filmstrip collections also were housed there.

The three elementary schools each had their comparable share of AV materials and equipment. They had building coordinators who devoted several hours a day to AV materials.

A daily pick-up and delivery service enabled the audiovisual center to keep the schools supplied with needed materials and equipment. This important task, which was performed by the audiovisual director's assistant, ensured the efficient delivery, distribution, and collection of films and other important items.

One of the schools' most effective pieces of equipment proved to be the Language Master, a device which enables the student to see written words, sentences, and symbols as well as being able to hear the specific items

pronounced by means of a card which contains a magnetic sound track. The voice on the sound track has a Midwestern or general speech pattern. Teachers may record their own voices for regional characteristics on the machine cards, and the students are also able to make their own vocal sounds and to compare them with the master or the teacher's voice. Additional blank cards are available for making special situation materials. The Language Master was of great value in teaching the children of Prince Edward County, many of whom had serious speech problems.

Educational television also played an important part in the Free Schools. The schools were enrolled in ETV courses, beamed from Richmond, Virginia. These classes, which were viewed for one hour per day, covered the areas of music, art, science, and current events. There were over 30 sets in operation in the four schools, and both the students and the teachers responded well to the ETV offerings.

Inservice AV Education

Inservice training in the correct use of educational media enhanced the use of the AV materials and equipment available in the Free Schools. The AV director visited one or more schools each day. During these visits, advice, information, and utilization problems were discussed. The AV director also made himself available to handle problems beyond the scope of the building coordinators.

The most important aspect of the inservice AV training was the weekly session at one or more of the schools which normally lasted one hour or less and which was devoted to demonstrating or explaining some phase of educational media.

Field Trips

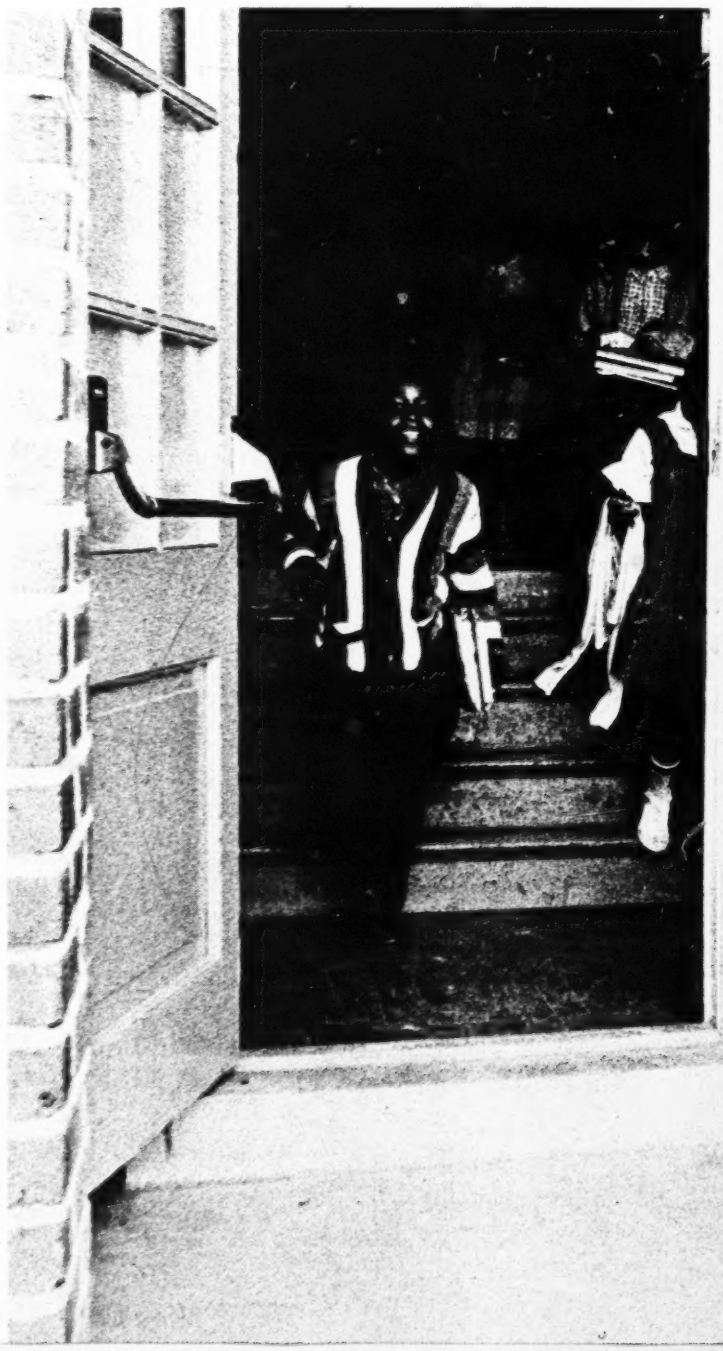
Field trips and excursions greatly helped to broaden the horizons of the students. The large buses owned by the Association were a familiar sight around the area. The students made trips to Richmond to the museum and to hear the Richmond symphony orchestra. Visits were also made to New York; to places in North Carolina; and to historical sites in Virginia, Washington, D.C., and the surrounding areas. Before these trips, many of the children had never been out of their small county.

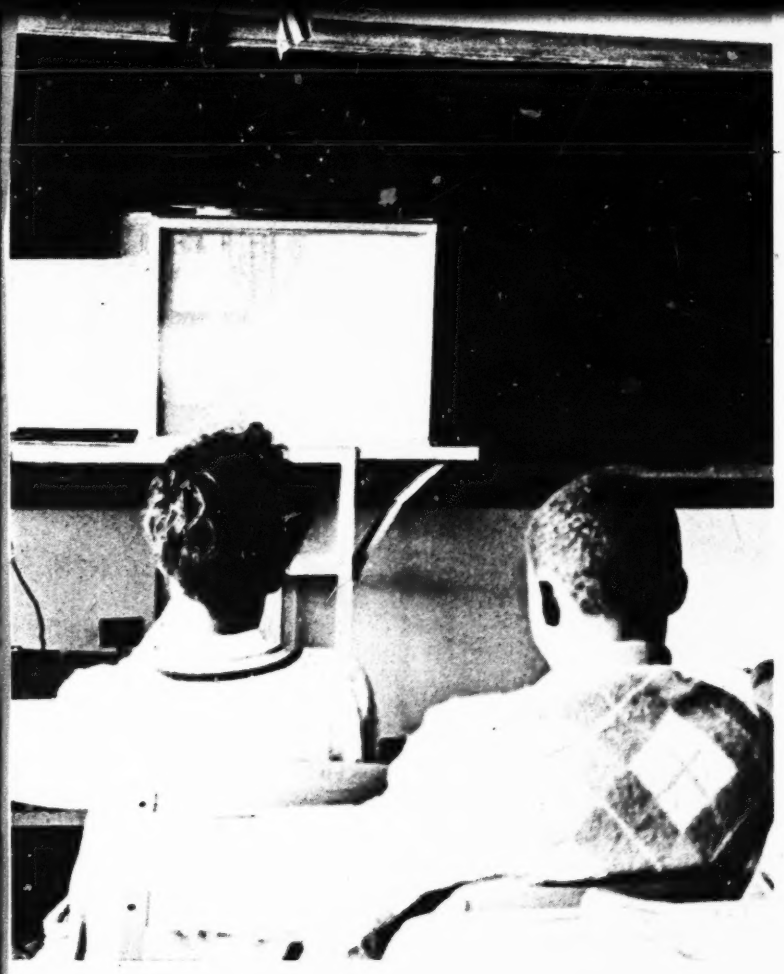
The immediate community was not overlooked, either. Visits to banks and other institutions served to bring the town into the classroom and the classroom into the town.

Summer School Program

The Free Schools operated a six-weeks summer school program from June 22 to August 6. Classes started at 8:30 A.M. and ended at 11:30 A.M., followed by a lunch period. The afternoons, from 1 P.M. to 3 P.M., were devoted to special activities such as art, athletics, typing, home economics, industrial arts, music, and recreational films. Students were divided into groups and took part in assigned afternoon activities two or more times during the week.

The audiovisual director, Mr. Edgerton, demonstrates the use of the rear view projector to this class of older students.





One measure of the success of the Free Schools program is the happy and hopeful faces of these children.

The AV Center performed its normal functions during the entire summer period with the additional responsibility of providing a daily recreational film. With the support of the Motion Picture Association of America, the AV Center showed a completely different film package every day. The package usually included a current feature film and a cartoon or short subject.

AV in the Community

During the major part of the Prince Edward Free Schools' existence, the local motion picture theater did not admit persons of color, and so there were some children who had never seen feature films in a theater setting. The daily recreational films, therefore, were greatly enjoyed by the students. The Free Schools' staff, students, and members of the community also enjoyed a free current feature two or more times a week in the evenings during the entire year. Hollywood and New York feature film producers made available to the Free Schools some of the latest films in 16mm, many of which were in Cinemascope.

The many cultural activities afforded the Free Schools were also open to the community. Noted concert singers, high school bands, the Dartmouth College Glee Club, the Virginia State College symphony orchestra, and many other persons entertained not only the staff and students, but interested members of the community as well.

Promise for the Future

The Prince Edward Free Schools closed in August 1964. The situation in the county is still far from ideal. Although the public schools have been reopened, a private academy is in its sixth year of operation, and most of the white children in the county attend it. Many of the children of Prince Edward County bear academic, cultural, and emotional scars from their four years of educational deprivation that may never be completely eradicated.

The audiovisual program in the Free Schools was a tremendous success, however. It was one of the programs that the Free Schools trustees insisted that the public schools continue. Several thousands of dollars of unused funds were specifically designated to support the AV program in the reopened public schools. All of the equipment acquired by the Free School Association was given to the public schools. The equipment loaned to the Free Schools by such firms as Bell & Howell was purchased by the Free Schools and also was given to the public schools. The complete inventory of AV materials and equipment was estimated to be worth nearly $50,000.

There is no doubt that the audiovisual program played a great part in the Free Schools' total program of education for the disadvantaged. It should serve as an indication to other schools serving similarly disadvantaged children that audiovisual instruction can contribute greatly to overcoming social and cultural poverty.